

February 23, 1972

Mr. Don J. Saylor, A.I.P., Director
of Planning
City of Las Vegas
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101

Dear Mr. Saylor:

Please be advised that the Las Vegas Mormon Fort has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The above information was received here February 11, 1972 from George B. Hartson, Director of the National Park Service. Las Vegas Mormon Fort is now qualified to receive Federal Preservation funding.

Sincerely,

Eric R. Cronkhite
Administrator

By
Wilbur E. Wieprecht
Park & Recreation Planner

ERC:WEW:fbj

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

Accepted: 2-23-72

STATE: Nevada	
COUNTY: Clark	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME	
COMMON: Las Vegas Mormon Fort	
AND/OR HISTORIC: Allegedly known during the Civil War by the U.S. Army as Fort Baker	

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: 900 Las Vegas Blvd. North			
CITY OR TOWN: Las Vegas			
STATE Nevada	CODE 32	COUNTY: Clark	CODE 003

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: City of Las Vegas, Nevada			
STREET AND NUMBER: 821 Las Vegas Blvd. North			
CITY OR TOWN: Las Vegas	STATE: Nevada	CODE 32	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Clark County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER: 200 East Carson			
CITY OR TOWN: Las Vegas	STATE: Nevada	CODE 32	

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: Nevada Historical Sites			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1968 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: University of Nevada, Desert Research Institute, Center for Western Studies			
STREET AND NUMBER: Stead Facility			
CITY OR TOWN: Reno	STATE: Nevada	CODE 32	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

It appears there exists conflicting opinions and writings as to the physical size and description of this adobe fort. Church records indicate the fort was 150' square while Colonel George Ruhlen's Authoritative Early Nevada Forts states it was 190' square. The walls were 14 feet high, built on a foundation stone 2' thick at the bottom and tapered to 1 foot in thickness at the top. A description of the interior and exterior as it exists today and written by Mrs. Janet Myers who resides in the structure and acts as caretaker/guide of the premises is as follows:

"Only seventy-five feet of the original structure remains. It is about two feet thick at the base. The building has been used for many different purposes over the years. When Hoover Dam was built, some experimenting with cement was taking place and a floor was poured throughout the building. Otherwise, there had only been a dirt one.

In the south part a fireplace which had been constructed had been plastered over. The fireplace had evidently been used by the original builders. It was reopened in 1956 but smoked so badly on windy days, it was again closed. The building now has ten windows but these have been added for the convenience of the occupants. It also has three doors; however, one is no longer used as such.

About thirty-five feet of the building is used as a museum and displays quite a number of artifacts of early history of Nevada. Among the most interesting are: an organ built in Paris in 1850, a complete spinning wheel, four chairs which are hand made, two with rawhide constructed seats, a wooden churn, two trunks, a very large chest of drawers, a sewing machine, one of the earliest models as it has no drawers, a day bed, a secretary or desk all handmade and without finish other than the original wood, a model displays a maternity dress said to be over one hundred years and still in good condition, another form displays a taffeta, handmade jacket over a corslette, another model represents a gold miner panning gold with an authentic pan, a buck saw, an old wooden bed which crossed the plains in a covered wagon and is crudely unfinished, the floor of the museum is covered with hand loomed rag carpet of the type used at that period but which was made by the Blind Center. There are what is known as a what-not, wooden shelves which display handmade rag dolls, a complete young child's wardrobe mostly of linen material and other memorabilia including a gun collection. The ceiling and one wall has been redone in knotty pine as the previously constructed ceiling and deteriorated, the entire structure is protected by a canopy."

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) June 14, 1855			
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>The Church of the Latter Day Saints was instrumental in the early settlement and development of southern Nevada with the establishment of Mormon colonies. The Las Vegas Mission was the first of these settlements to be established, and was selected by the church to: (1) Raise crops which could not be raised in the colder northern Utah climate; (2) Find new homes for the numerous Mormons coming to Salt Lake Valley area; and (3) To establish a halfway station on the Mormon trail between San Bernardino and Salt Lake. A thirty man mission group left Salt Lake City on May 10, 1855, and arrived in Las Vegas on June 14, 1855. After touring the Las Vegas Valley on horseback, the decision was made to establish the permanent location on the site of the original stopping place, and work was commenced immediately on the Las Vegas Mormon Fort. The fort was located adjacent to one of the two clear streams of water flowing from the nearby Las Vegas springs which nurtured native grasses, and created lush meadows in the valley near the Sunrise Mountain.</p> <p>The natural oasis of meadow and mesquite forest was the winter homeland of the Paiute Indians, who spent their summers in the Charleston Mountains. The valley and the meadows were first known to the Spanish, who named Las Vegas "The Meadows" and marked it as such on maps of the southwestern desert.</p> <p>Antonio Armijo stopped at the springs in 1829-30, traveling the route which became known as the Old Spanish Trail. After 1830 the route was traveled by Spanish traders, emigrants and frontiersmen who rested beside the springs. On one of his western exploration trips, John C. Fremont camped here on May 3, 1844.</p> <p>On about August 3, 1855 the missionaries started to build the walls 14 feet high, two feet thick at the bottom, and one foot at the top. The adobe fort enclosed eight two-story houses. Outside the fort the missionaries cultivated small gardens and fields, two and one half acres being assigned to each of the party; they planted fruit and shade trees, and established friendly relations with the Paiutes. Near the fort was also built the first smelter west of the Missouri River. This was</p>			

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Nevada	
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(Number all entries)

used by the Mormons in their Potosi lead-silver mine venture.

After the mormons departed in 1858, called back to Utah by their leader Brigham Young, Octavius Decatur Gass established the Las Vegas Rancho, using the adobe structures as headquarters. He farmed 800 acres in field crops, orchards, and grazed many cattle, supplying produce to miners and travelers.

In 1882 the Archibald Stewart family bought the ranch. Soon thereafter Mr. Stewart was killed in a feud with one of his neighbors. Mrs. Stewart, with children, continued to operate the ranch as an oasis in the desert, expanding it from 800 acres to 1,800 acres. For 20 years Helen J. Stewart was known as a gracious, intelligent hostess to those who traveled the southwest. She exemplified the best of pioneer characteristics Initiative, determination, steadfastness, plus compassion for those less fortunate. Her story ranks equally well with that of the earlier Mormon missionaries.

Mrs. Stewart sold her ranch in 1903 to the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad Company for the Las Vegas townsite, which was auctioned in lots to buyers on May 18, 1905, starting contemporary Las Vegas.

A further note of interest, on January 10, 1856, the Las Vegas Mission was notified by the U.S. Post Office Department that the town would henceforth be known as Bringhurst, New Mexico Territory, and thus the Las Vegas Mormon Fort became the first Las Vegas post office building. Las Vegas became a portion of the territory of Arizona, and finally became a part of Nevada on January 18, 1867, the state then firming up what are today's boundaries of Nevada.

A note about Fort Baker. Fort Baker was apparently a fort in name only. It was a name assigned to the Las Vegas area, as a diversionary tactic during the Civil War in an effort to divert the attention of Confederate spies and sympathizers in California from the real objectives of getting Col. James H. Charleston's command of the 1st California Volunteers across Arizona to New Mexico (Los Pinos). Information was released to the effect that a portion of the command would be assigned to Fort Yuma, Arizona. Three companies of infantry would go to Fort Mojave, Arizona, and one company of infantry and three of cavalry would go to Fort Baker at Las Vegas, at that time also in Arizona Territory. In reality, none of Carleton's command ever reached, or served at Mojave or Baker nor was it designed that they should.

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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The fort ~~in~~ Las Vegas retains the name "Mormon Fort" as it was built by the Mormons assigned to the Las Vegas Mission, and was used by them as a fort during their sojourn at Las Vegas, 1855-1858.

Another note of significance, Las Vegas Mormon Fort is the oldest inhabited building in Nevada today.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History - Lower Colorado Region, Nevada, October 1970,
Victor Goodwin, Forester, River Basin Planning Staff,
United States Department of Agriculture.

Authoritative Early Nevada Forts, Colonel George Ruhlen

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES			
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"		
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"		
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"		
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.2741

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Gene Amberg, Supervisor of Federal Aid Programs, Planning Dept.

ORGANIZATION: City of Las Vegas DATE: November, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 821 Las Vegas Boulevard North

CITY OR TOWN: Las Vegas STATE: Nevada CODE: 32

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name S/ERIC R. GRANKHITE

Title ADMINISTRATOR/SLO

Date 11/17/71

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST: _____

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NEVADA HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY

YOU can help preserve Nevada's heritage. The Nevada State Parks System is conducting an historic sites survey so that the state will be better able to protect and preserve her legacy from the past. Please help by filling out the form below and leaving it with the receptionist. Forms may also be mailed to the NEVADA STATE PARKS SYSTEM, 201 South Fall Street, Carson City 89701.

1. COUNTY: CLARK
TYPE OF SITE:
Building ☒
Town _____ Archeological site _____
Other _____
SITE NAME: Las Vegas Mormon Fort
APPROXIMATE DATE(S):
Built in 1855

2. LOCATION: 908 Las Vegas Blvd. No.
Las Vegas, Nevada
OWNERSHIP: (if known)
Public City of Las Vegas
Private _____ Owner (if known): _____
OPEN TO PUBLIC:
by appointment
Yes ☒ No _____

3. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, NOTABLE FEATURES (use additional sheet or back if necessary):
This Fort was beginning of colonization in this Southern Nevada area -- built by 30 Mormon missionaries who arrived at this site on June 14 - 15, 1855. A portion of the original stands and is the oldest building in Nevada.

4. SOURCES FOR THE ABOVE: (optional) Historical records, personal diaries of men involved, Church records of assignments and names of those sent on this mission.

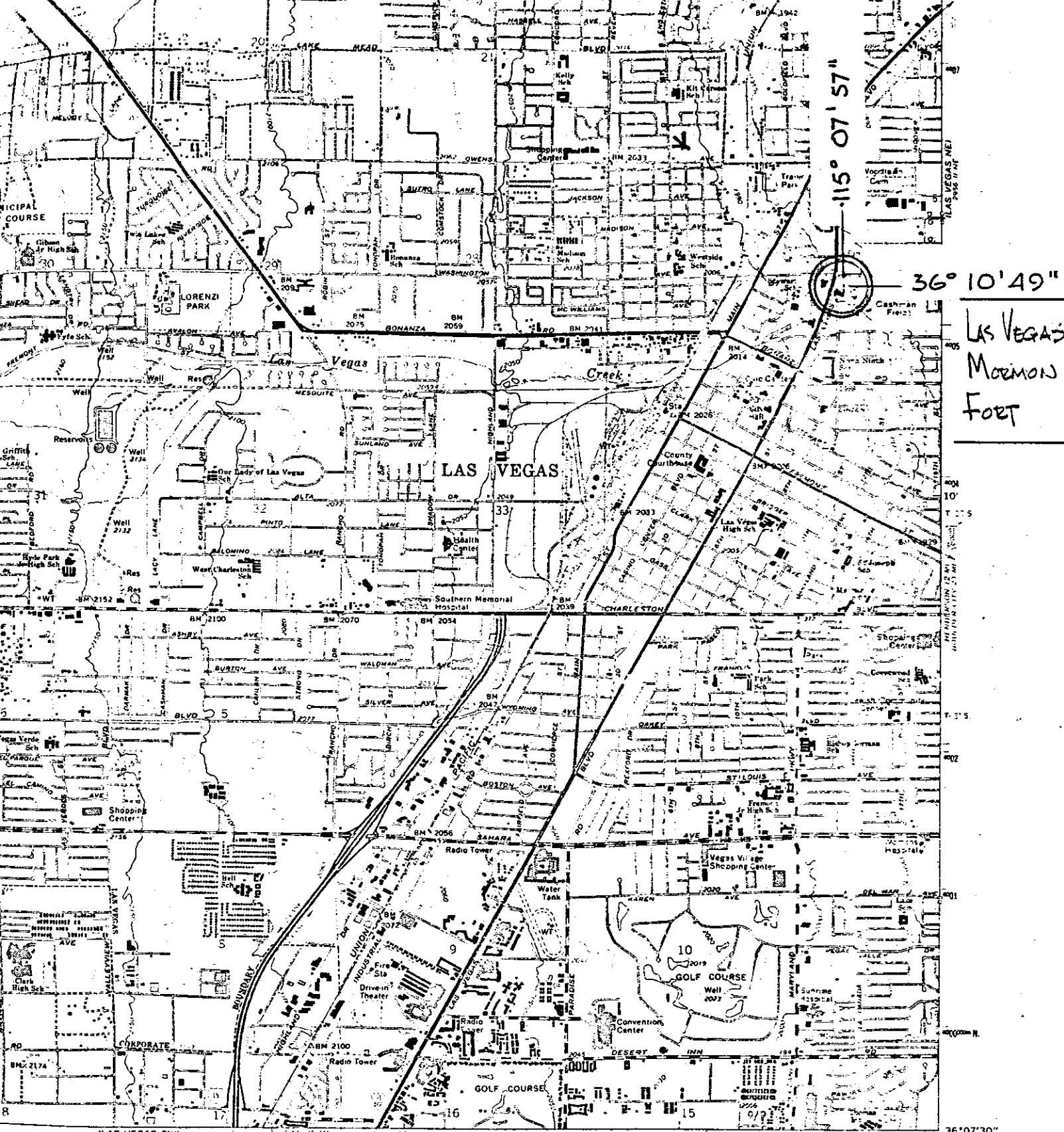
5. Do you have any written material, photographs, manuscripts, etc. which relate to this site? Please specify. PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH TO FORM
Yes, copies of above listed references, also NEVADA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PAPERS, VOLUME 5, published in 1925

6. Physical Condition of the site: (describe)
In fair condition, originally built of adobe

Is this site threatened by overt destruction? YES! By people, who own property adjacent to it, and who are careless with their water, rubbish, etc., they have allowed water to run around and underneath this building in spite of all our efforts to save it, they are undermining it.

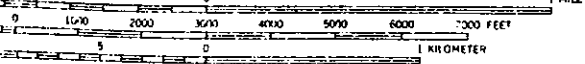
NAME, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER OF RECORDER:

Mrs. Verna Mortensen, President 1813 Wengert Ave. Las Vegas, Nev. 89104
Clark County Daughters of Utah Pioneers May 7, 1973
DATE:



LAS VEGAS
MORMON
FORT

(LAS VEGAS SW)
2956 11 SW
SCALE 1:24000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route	U.S. Route

LAS VEGAS NW, NEV.
NW 1/4 LAS VEGAS, S. 014DAPHOLE
N3607.5-W11507.5/7.5

1967

AMS 2956 11 NW-SERIES 7898

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEVADA

Date Entered FEB 1 1972

Name

Location

Las Vegas Mormon Fort

Las Vegas
Clark County

COPY OF CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION

Also Notified

Hon. Alan Bible
Hon. Howard W. Cannon
Hon. Walter S. Baring

WASHINGTON AVE

WASHINGTON AVE.

407.53'

245.12

55.68'

SUBJECT
PROPERTY

LATITUDE:

36° 10' 49"

LONGITUDE:

115° 01' 57"

ELK'S LODGE
PRIVATE PROPERTY

CITY OWNED
PROPERTY

SKETCH

(NOT TO SCALE)

BRUCE AVE.

GRACE AVE.

LOUSE